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ABSTRACT

This publication tells the stories of eight schools from around the nation that have used the Open Court Reading program, describing the history of the schools, the challenges they faced, and their attempts to meet those challenges. The schools are located in California, Florida, Texas, and New York. Each of the school stories includes a focus on demonstrable positive results on reading achievement. The schools serve children with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic characteristics. They share many characteristics, perhaps the most important of which is a set of results. As a group, they show a reversal of the trends of failure, documenting improvements in reading performance and levels of achievement that often dramatically exceed that of their peers in similar schools. All of the schools and their effective reading programs have implemented ongoing programs of professional development for their teachers, used assessments of student progress during the school year to ensure effective instruction, demonstrated the importance of the principal as the instructional leader, and created exciting climates within their schools to encourage learning. A selected annotated bibliography presents research supporting instruction in Open Court Reading. (SM)

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RESULTS *with* OPEN COURT READING

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To teach a child to read
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Results. More than at any time in recent history, attention is being focused on the results our schools produce. Expectations have been raised. Student performance standards have been identified for virtually every subject. It is essential that we maintain these high standards and expectations.

Everyone who graduates from high school truly literate starts to develop that literacy in the earliest grades. We must look to schools where students are achieving the highest standards of literacy and identify the practices that enable them to achieve those goals.

This report tells the stories of eight different schools. The stories describe the history of each school, the challenges they faced, and some of their attempts to meet those challenges. We have also included an appendix of research supporting instruction using the *Open Court Reading* program, which has effected demonstrable positive results on reading achievement at all the schools described.

Each of the school stories includes a focus on these results. Wherever possible, we present the most recently available information about recent growth trends and on the grades most directly affected by the reading program being implemented. The schools serve children with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic characteristics. They share many characteristics, perhaps the most important of which is a set of results. As a group they show an impressive reversal of the trends of failure, documenting improvements in performance and levels of achievement that often dramatically exceed that of their peers in similar schools.

The schools and the effective reading program that are described here also share several other critically important common characteristics. They all have:

- implemented ongoing programs of professional development for their teachers
- used assessments of student progress during the school year to ensure effective instruction
- demonstrated the importance of the principal as the instructional leader
- created exciting climates within their schools to encourage learning

And most importantly, these schools demonstrate the importance of maintaining high expectations for all students, not just the brightest or most privileged.

The leaders of the schools described herein are eager to share what they have learned and to see their practices and experiences spread to other schools. Please feel free to contact the people who are identified in each article. We've provided telephone numbers, fax numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses wherever possible to make this communication as easy as possible.

Let's learn from those who have the results that show this effectiveness. Let's help teachers and supervisors use this information. Let's all work together to help our children become more effective learners.

Susan L. Traiman
The Business Roundtable
Education Initiative

Robert E. Evanson
President
McGraw-Hill Education

Vincent Ferrandino
National Association of
Elementary School Principals

Perhaps the most sobering message from our nation's recent interest in reading is how tightly children's achievement is reined by the educational practices and expectations of their classrooms. In some classrooms, nearly all of the children flourish. In others, they do not. Both are true in every state and every sort of community in our country, large or small, rich or poor. How can we help our schools be as good as they must be? Increasingly, we are told that good instruction must heed the lessons of research.

This is a major message of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. It was also the major message of the National Reading Panel's report, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction* (2000); of the National Research Council's report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties* (1998); of the American Federation of Teachers' report, *Building on the best, learning from what works* (1998); of the Learning First Alliance's *Every Child Reading: An Action Plan* (1998); and indeed of many other recent reports from institutions, organizations, and every level of government. Significantly, it was equally the compelling message of the vast body of scientific research that I synthesized on behalf of the U.S. Congress more than a decade ago, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print* (1990).

Marilyn Jager Adams

To be sure, the first requirement of effective schooling is good classroom management—the art of keeping all of one's students happily engaged. Yet engaging children in ways that promote learning depends on understanding what that must entail in both overview and moment-by-moment activity. It depends on providing literacy instruction in a way that assures that for no child does any lesson depend on knowledge or abilities that have not been supported in the classroom and equally that for every child each lesson offers challenge and growth. It depends, in other words, on perspective and analysis that is beyond the reach of any single human being on her or his own.

Therein lies the value of research. Research is the collective work of legions, all doing their best to test and retest and to extend the collective knowledge of the profession. Good research offers unrivaled guidance toward understanding what children must learn, how those facets interrelate, how to tell whether any is missing or misconstrued in our instructional models, and good ways to teach. In addition, research can provide objective distance from the individual student, teacher, or classroom and identify what works best in the hands of most teachers, for most children, and for the long term. Research can tell us what kinds of learning depend on instruction. And it can tell us what kinds of instruction work well and what kinds are shortsighted or even counterproductive. Research can also tell us how to assess students' progress and difficulties so that we can maximize the pace and impact of our curriculum while losing no key lesson and leaving no child behind.

For 40 years, *Open Court Reading* has steadfastly structured its curriculum on the strongest lessons research could offer. For 40 years, as literacy research has grown in power and scope, *Open Court Reading* has been augmented and tuned or changed accordingly. For 40 years, *Open Court Reading* has demonstrated that instruction based on tested, research-based practices gets results. Over and over, the achievement of students who have been taught with *Open Court Reading* has been shown to be exceptional on state-mandated tests, national standardized tests, district tests, and a host of more specific measures.

Whether we look to scientific journals and reports or success stories such as those presented here, the message is compelling. Through scientific research, we have learned with more clarity and detail than ever before what is involved in skillful reading—how the brain works, what kinds of knowledge it uses, and how it uses it. Most importantly, we have learned how to teach beginning reading far more effectively than is too often the case. Provided that we apply the lessons we have learned, there is no reason for any healthy child in any classroom in our country to be left behind in reading. For the future of our country and our children, there is no more urgent or important mission than turning this potential into reality.

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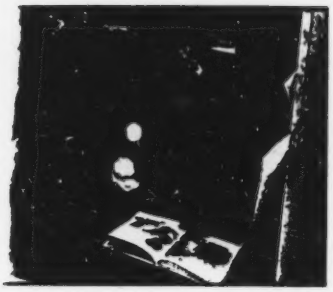

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Lemoore Union Elementary School District, Lemoore, California

During the 1997-1998 academic year, the teachers and administration at Lemoore Union Elementary School District realized that the district had a problem. The reading program that the district was using was not effective for its diverse population. Its students were consistently scoring below the 50th percentile on the state-mandated SAT/9 test. Teachers and administrators in the Lemoore Union Elementary School District resolved to improve students' reading performance.

The district, which consists of four schools of more than 3,000 students, includes 38 percent Hispanic students and 10 percent African-American students. "It was clear that our instruction wasn't working for our students. We were especially troubled by the low performance of our English-Language Learners. We realized that we had to find a program that would reach all of our students. And it had to be well organized and thorough to help the many new teachers we are bringing in every year," said Assistant Superintendent Lois Zercher.

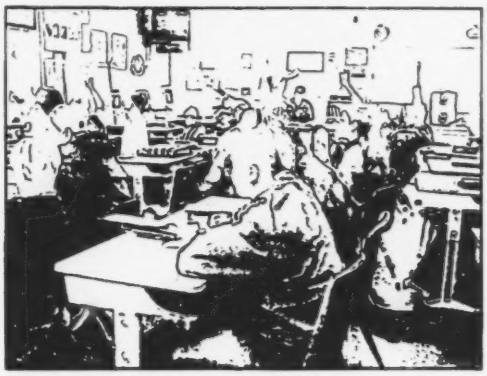
Enter Open Court

So Assistant Superintendent Zercher worked with other district officials to form a plan of action. After reviewing a number of programs, they decided to try the balanced instruction of the *Open Court Reading* program. Teachers and district administrators were impressed not only by the comprehensiveness of the program, but also by the program's commitment to teacher training and instruction. Upon implementation of the program, all teachers received intensive training by *Open Court* consultants, including visits by two experts to district classrooms five days every month for additional support and guidance.

"In 26 years of work in education, I have never experienced the high level of support we receive from *Open Court*," says Zercher. "It's really amazing!"

Results

After just one year using the *Open Court Reading* program, reading test scores shot up. Assistant Superintendent Zercher noted convincing improvement particularly among the English-Language Learners. An impressive 74 percent of the first grade ELL class at Lemoore Elementary, 65 percent at Meadow Lane Elementary, and 63 percent at Engvall Elementary scored above the 50th percentile on the state-mandated SAT/9. Mr. Rick Rayburn, the principal at Lemoore Elementary, was particularly pleased. "We were confident that we would



see improvement, but to have 74 percent of our first grade English-Language Learners improve so much was the best news of all," says Rayburn.

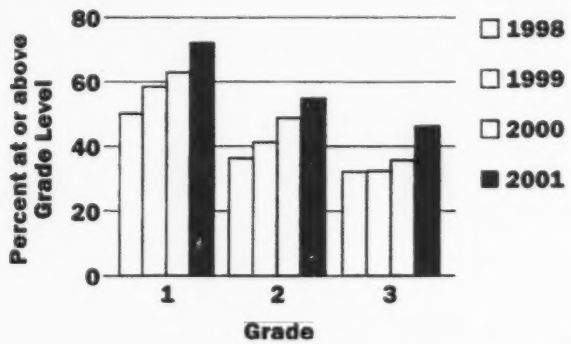
Students in other levels also improved. These results are shown in the table below. As can be seen on this chart, in 1998 only 38 percent of second graders in the district scored at or above the 50th percentile. By 2001, that number had reached an incredible 51 percent. Within three years, students in other grades throughout the district saw similar steady climbs.

Lemoore teachers and administrators attribute much of their success to *Open Court's* focus on teaching critical skills for reading, along with the publisher's commitment to teacher support. "The professional development that we received with *Open Court* made all the difference. Not only did we learn how to use the program materials, we learned about why the instruction includes what it does," said one first grade teacher. "Not only did our scores go up, but the students are proud of their reading for the first time. When we have visitors in our classrooms, invariably our children want to read to them. They are so proud of what they've learned."

A Bright Future

Teachers and administrators in the Lemoore Union Elementary School District are confident they will continue to make progress with *Open Court*. Teachers will receive the support they need to be successful teachers, while students continue to build a solid foundation for reading success.

Percentage of Students Scoring at or above Grade Level on SAT/9



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Sacramento City Unified School District, Sacramento, California

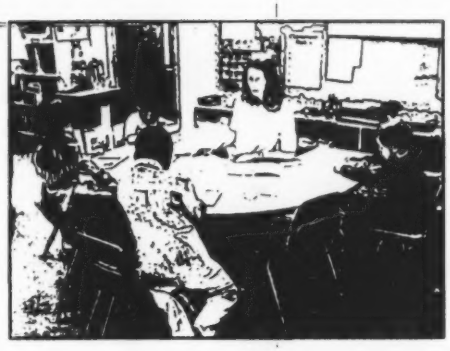
Sacramento City Unified School District had been battling poor reading scores for years.

"It was frustrating," said Jim Sweeney, Superintendent of the Sacramento City Unified School District. "Our students couldn't read. Our district, which is 22 percent African-American and 23 percent Hispanic, needed a reading curriculum that would help all of our students, not just a select few."

While searching for a reading program to help his district, Superintendent Sweeney came across Inglewood Unified School District in Inglewood, California. What he saw fascinated him. Inglewood, which has a large number of English-Language Learners (ELL) and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, achieved high reading scores using the *Open Court Reading* program.

The test scores convinced Superintendent Sweeney. At the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year, he implemented the *Open Court* program into the district.

Good Scores



Three years after implementing *Open Court*, nearly 3,500 more elementary students are reading at grade level. As the chart on the right shows, the percentage of second-grade students scoring at or above the 50th percentile climbed from 35% in 1998 to 56% in 2001. The percentage of third-grade students scoring at or above the 50th percentile was strong as well, climbing from 29% in 1998 to 42% in 2001. Gains were more modest in grades 4 through 6, but students in all grades improved.

Why was the increase in test scores so dramatic? "It is a solid approach with a balance of phonics and rich literature," said Superintendent Sweeney. "Plus we have received great support from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, which has provided funds for coaching, staff development, materials, and technical support. But what really made the difference is our teachers. Our reading gains are a result of the great job so many did in implementing *Open Court*. We must never forget that program implementation is the key to our success."

To help students, all of the schools in the district maintain a common pacing schedule so that every classroom in the district is at the same place each and every day. "This is most important to transient students

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because no matter how often they move from school to school, they can pick up where they left off the day before," says Sweeney.

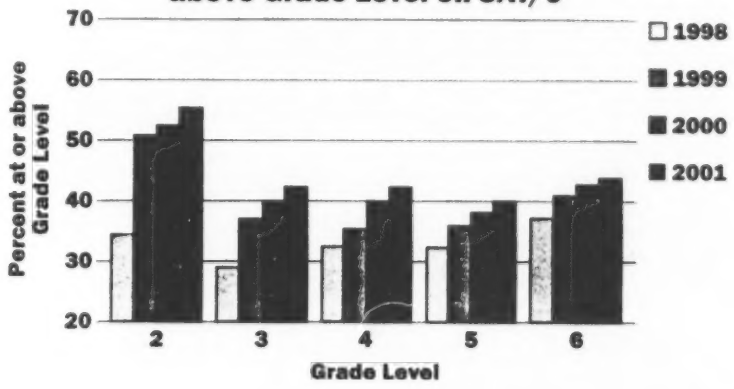
Sweeney notes the importance of professional development for all of the Sacramento City Unified School District teachers. "*Open Court* consultants helped teachers with pacing, as well as bridging the material for ELL students," he said. "They have been with us every step of the way. It's nice to know that the *Open Court* consultants will continue to stand beside us for the long run."

A Future of Success

Superintendent Sweeney is hopeful for the future. "Our district began in 1854, with two teachers and 90 students aged seven through nine. We are now the eighth largest school district in California, with 51,000 students in 77 schools. As we continue to grow, it is imperative that we do not leave a child behind or let a student slip through the cracks. With *Open Court*, our students are actively engaged in learning, and the results show. The ability to read is the foundation to good learning and we are committed to providing a good base for our students."

"*Open Court* is a highly complex teaching approach that demands great skill. We will continue to be successful with *Open Court* because we have the teachers and the commitment to make it work for all of our students."

Percentage of Students Scoring at or above Grade Level on SAT/9



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Kelso Elementary School, Inglewood, California

Kelso Elementary School, located literally underneath the flight path of Los Angeles International Airport, has become one of California's most successful high-poverty schools. It has a student body of 1,650 students, 78 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced lunches. Forty-eight percent of the students are Hispanic and 51 percent are African-American.

Kelso Elementary's road to a good education has been a rocky one. Students were taught using the once-fashionable whole-language approach. "We went downhill for years," says Marjorie Thompson, the recently retired principal of Kelso Elementary. "Due to whole language, the children simply could not read."

Complicating matters, the school gained a large number of students learning English as a second language. "The school district sent us new students with different needs," says Thompson, "but it had not sent any materials to help us adjust to the needs of those students."

Principal Thompson, rejecting low expectations and efforts to "dumb down" the curriculum, recognized that students needed a program that was not only rigorous and structured, but one that had a history of success as well.

A Change

A teacher at Kelso Elementary suggested a switch to *Open Court* because she had seen it help a student who was having difficulty acquiring basic reading skills. With the help of *Open Court's* balanced approach, the struggling student was able to read at grade level in a short amount of time. The teacher was convinced that a program that had spurred so much improvement in one student was worth trying with others.

Thompson agreed. Kelso Elementary School implemented *Open Court* as a pilot program in each grade from K through 6. The pilots were successful across the board! "When we got *Open Court*," says Thompson, "our students really turned the corner."

As she explained to a school-board subcommittee, *Open Court* worked in Kelso Elementary School because "the program is not just phonics oriented, but it includes comprehension, and writing." Thompson believes that students in programs that do not include all aspects of reading will not fare nearly as well. "When looking at phonics programs, it is important to consider all aspects of reading instruction. If a school chooses a program that relies on phonics alone, teachers will abandon the program when they realize it does not offer the balanced instruction that *Open Court* does."

Instructors, or reading coaches, helped teachers implement the reading program. These coaches proved particularly helpful to the Kelso teaching staff, especially to those who hold emergency teaching credentials. If teachers needed to have something clarified or explained, they then knew where to go.

A Long History of Success

Kelso Elementary has been successful with *Open Court* for almost 20 years now. In that time period, the school's reading scores have been consistently higher than in schools across California. And this trend continues to the present. As the chart below demonstrates, the strongest scores occured among third graders. In 1999, more than 50 percent of third graders scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading on the SAT/9 test. In 2001, that number reached more than 60 percent. Since 1998, the numbers of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the SAT/9 have skyrocketed. Again, the biggest leap took place in grade 3, where students jumped more than 20 percentile points in only three years. Those are impressive test scores, especially when compared to similar schools.

Students with practically no ability to read fluently continue to enroll at Kelso Elementary School. Mrs. Jacqueline Moore, the current principal of Kelso Elementary, believes that the school's continued focus on reading and literacy is a critical component schoolwide.

According to Mrs. Moore, there are several key factors that make *Open Court Reading* a success:

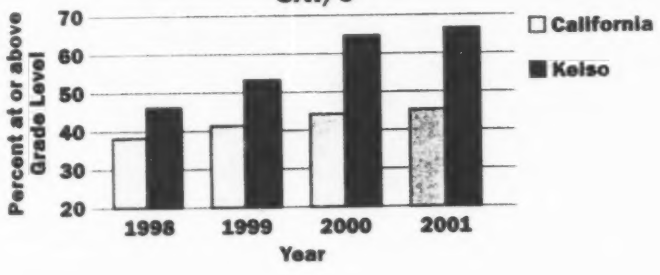
- Well trained teachers. All teachers must complete training in the *Open Court Reading* program.
- Teachers work collaboratively to make the program a success.
- Constant attention to *Open Court Reading* unit test results.
- A reading specialist who provides additional support for students and teachers.

According to Moore, "The ability to read and use information appropriately is an achievable goal for all children. The Kelso staff is devoted to teaching every child how to read, and read well."

"We immediately immerse them in reading and go year-round," says Thompson. Frequently, we see students come in as nonreaders in December or January and within three to four months they learn to read."

According to Linda Stevenson, a longtime Kelso teacher who was the first to use *Open Court Reading* at the school, "We're committed to overturning a rampant perception in education—that so-called low socioeconomic children can't learn. Of course they can learn. We're here to prove it."

Percentage of Grade 3 Students Scoring at or above Grade Level on SAT/9



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Curtis Creek School District, Sonora, California

Linda LaMarre, former Superintendent of the Curtis Creek School District, was in a quandary.

Low reading scores had plagued her district for years. However, many of the factors that typically lead to low reading scores, such as a transient population or children for whom English was not their native language, were not problematic in Curtis Creek. For example, only 7 percent of the district is Hispanic. The district did not have a significant population from a high-poverty area. Only 37 percent of the district's 805 students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. LaMarre launched an investigation to find the source of the problem.

The cause of the problem soon became evident: The district did not have a uniform reading curriculum. Teachers made individual determinations within their own classrooms. Instruction in one grade level might focus on traditional skills and in another grade level on creative writing. LaMarre was soon convinced that a consistent approach to reading instruction was critical.

Enter Open Court

In an effort to improve the reading performance of the students in the district, administrators explored various types of reading curricula that were available. Superintendent LaMarre specifically wanted a program that would meet the criteria of the California Reading Initiative, passed in 1995. This initiative called for a strong literature and comprehension program that included:

- a balance of oral and written language
- phonemic awareness and decoding skills
- an ongoing diagnosis of teaching and assessment
- a focus on children at risk of reading failure

LaMarre found that *Open Court* was the only program that met all of the initiative's standards. Curtis Creek piloted *Open Court* for a year, and then adopted the program in March of 1998.

Success

Along with the new reading materials came a program of professional development for all the Curtis Creek teachers. *Open Court Reading* consultants and coaches spent two days with teachers and five days with coach coordinators before the school year. Consultants also returned for an additional twenty days throughout the first year to provide on-site

support and training. "We felt from the very beginning that *Open Court* was a partner with us in helping to improve our reading scores," said one teacher. "They didn't come in and talk for two hours and then just wish us luck. Their support made all the difference for many of us, especially in the first year."

After only a few years of using *Open Court*, Curtis Creek students showed substantial improvements in the district's reading test scores. The most impressive scores occurred in the second grade. In 1999, 60 percent of second graders were reading at or above the 50th percentile on the SAT/9 test. That number reached more than 80 percent by 2001.

"The scores really tell the story," says Larry Hoyt, current Superintendent of Curtis Creek School District. "If you look at where our district was three years ago and where we are today, there's only one conclusion: *Open Court Reading* works."

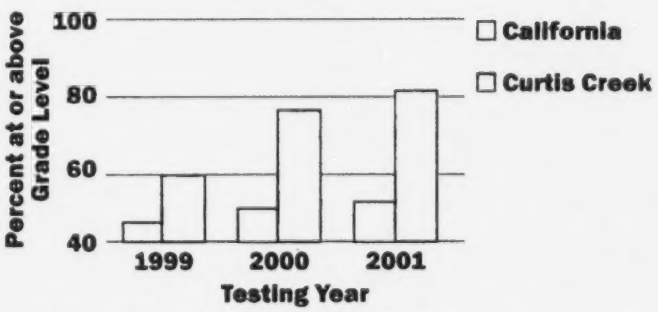
Perhaps the most touching example of the program's success involved two young students who had been identified as candidates for special education intervention in kindergarten. After using *Open Court* in first grade, both students scored above the 50th percentile on their first-grade reading tests. "The most important aspect of a success like this," said Superintendent LaMarre, "is that these students gain a success and satisfaction that helps them throughout their school careers."

Such examples also led to much more satisfaction with the schools on the part of the local parents. Materials are now sent home on a regular basis for children to read to their parents. Parents are pleased that their children not only can read, but also want to read.

A Bright Future

Parents, teachers, and administrators are convinced that *Open Court* has made a difference in their district. "*Open Court* is the most complete program that I have seen in my career," says Superintendent LaMarre, who has been in education since 1972. "If I had children of my own in elementary school, it's what I would want them to use."

Percentage of Grade 2 Students Scoring at or above Grade Level on SAT/9



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Canopy Oaks Elementary, Tallahassee, Florida

Canopy Oaks Elementary opened its doors in August 1998 with a clean slate and room to grow. With a student population of 630, 19 percent of whom were African-American, Principal Carol Bishop chose to implement the *Open Court Reading* program in Grades K-6. She had experienced noteworthy achievement with the program at a former school, and as a former *Open Court* classroom teacher herself, she knew the program succeeds at teaching children to read. As the principal at a new school, she wanted to give teachers a structured program with an explicit, systematic phonics approach.

According to Ms. Bishop, "*Open Court* works best for three reasons: its balanced approach between phonics instruction and authentic literature, the daily writing opportunities and spelling lessons that come directly from the literature, and the development of critical-thinking strategies with Inquiry and Research. The program is comprehensive. It covers phonics, reading, literature, comprehension, and writing." Says Ms. Bishop, "I also respect its strong base in research."

Students in grades K-6 receive reading instruction for a minimum of two hours daily using the *Open Court* program. Students who need additional help receive more intensive instruction to close the gap in test scores, to maintain program standards, and to reduce retention at year's end. To keep the classroom instruction on track, teachers receive ongoing training. An *Open Court* consultant visits the school on an ongoing basis to assist with the implementation of the reading program and to monitor its instruction in all the classrooms. "We couldn't have done it without the support of the *Open Court* consultants. They truly do provide professional development, not just textbook in-service. Our teachers now have a much deeper understanding of what it takes for a child to learn to read. That's irreplaceable," says Ms. Bishop.

Continuing Success

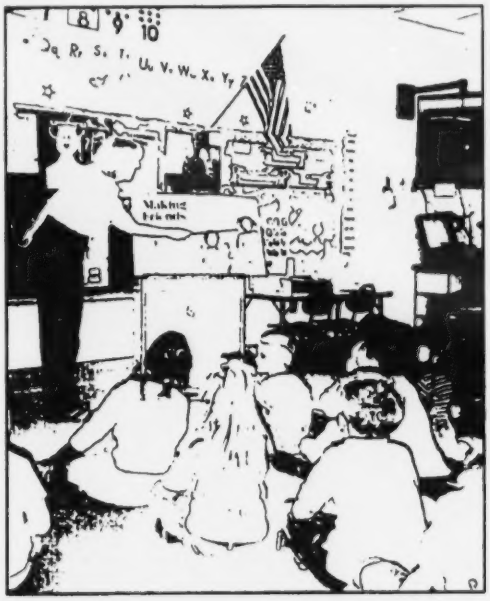
Since 1998, teachers at Canopy Oaks have come to truly appreciate the *Open Court* reading program. With the use of Decodable Books, students benefit from improved fluency. In addition, Ms. Bishop says, "Students have increased self-esteem because they experience daily success with the Decodable Books." Teachers also benefit from using support materials such as Sound/Spelling Cards, the kindergarten lion puppet, and *Willy the Wisher Thinking Skills Book*

Several teachers have also commented on how the program's outcomes have affected their own expectations for students. "I truly didn't realize before the level of reading ability that my first graders could achieve," says Shanna Sadler, a first-grade teacher at Canopy Oaks. "Now that I've experienced it, I can't imagine being in a situation in which kids aren't expected to be able to read independently until second grade or even later!"

"*Open Court* gives students consistency through the years," Ms. Bishop adds. "It helps them become self-directed and independent learners."

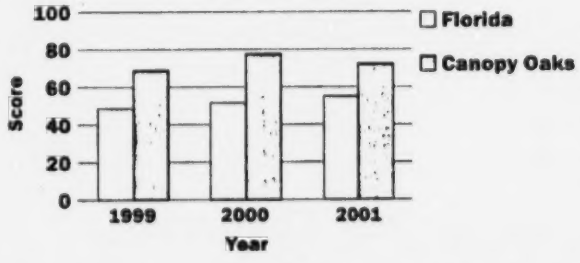
Test results show that Canopy Oaks is flourishing. On the California Achievement Test (CAT/5), first graders scored 60 percent in 1999. That number rose to more than 70 percent in 2000. Second and third graders had similar results. Since scores are increasing, the percentage of students who rank in the lower quartile in Reading on the CAT/5 are decreasing—from 7 percent of grade 4 students in 1998 to 0 percent in 1999 and 2000.

Ms. Bishop stresses, "*Open Court* provides teachers with the tools needed to help students become successful, lifelong learners and readers. This program actively engages students in learning to



read and in the reading process." She adds, "Our school vision is that every learner will be a success in our community. *Open Court* has helped that vision become a reality."

Students Scoring at Level 3 and Above on FCAT Reading



To teach a child to read is to affect a life forever.

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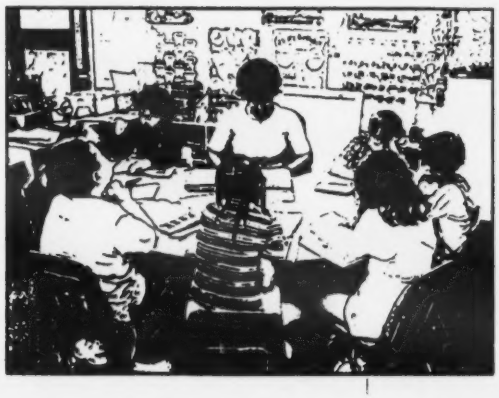
Hartsfield Elementary School, Tallahassee, Florida

The first graders sit on a rug at the front of Miss Tarquinio's classroom in Hartsfield Elementary School. Holding a Sound/Spelling Card, Miss Tarquinio points to the letter *k* as she reads, "Carlos has a new camera. When he takes pictures, his camera makes a clicking sound like this: /k/ /k/ /k/ /k/ /k/." The children all pretend to push the shutters on their cameras as they say "/k/ /k/ /k/ /k/ /k/." Miss Tarquinio continues, "In his room, Carlos takes pictures of his cute kitten, Cozy. Can you help Carlos take pictures with his camera?" The class replies "/k/ /k/ /k/ /k/ /k/." Soon the children are calling out other words that begin with /k/. The association between the sound and the letters that represent that sound is firmly in place.



Hartsfield Elementary School, located in Leon County, Florida, is home to 550 students. Its diverse population includes more than 60 percent African-American or Hispanic students. More than 50 percent qualify for the free lunch program.

In 1995, 32 percent of Hartsfield first graders and 25 percent of second graders could be classified as among the nation's poorest readers. Their lagging test scores prompted a former principal to look into the methods that were being used to teach reading at the school. His analysis of reading instruction revealed that teachers employed a wide variety of different approaches to teaching reading. Unfortunately, there was little consistency in instruction, even within grade levels. Kindergarten students received virtually no early reading instruction.

Enter Open Court

Based on the investigation and review of many potential programs, the Hartsfield staff decided to implement the *Open Court Reading* program, a balanced reading curriculum that emphasizes phonemic awareness and teaches phonics along with reading comprehension and writing. *Open Court* became central in the school's effort to achieve better reading ability in kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Along with the new reading materials came extensive professional development for the staff. *Open Court* consultants and reading coaches worked with the primary grade teachers for two days before they even began to teach. In addition, consultants and coaches returned three times throughout the year to provide support, to observe the classes in action, and to answer the many questions about the hows and whys of this new instructional approach.

Furthermore, the staff utilized more materials than ever before to involve parents in their children's reading activities. "We sent home black-and-white versions of many of the decodable stories that the students were reading in class," says one Hartsfield teacher. "The children were quite

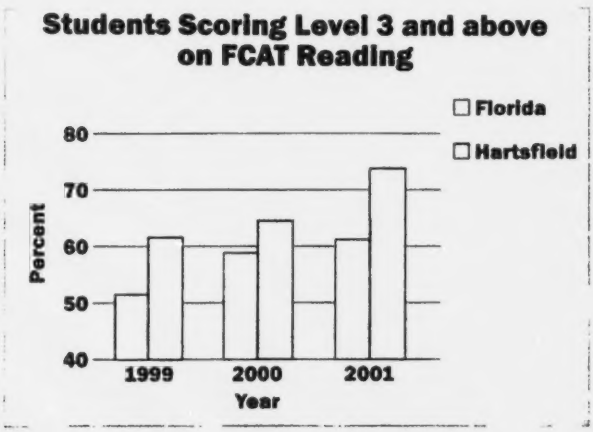
proud to be able to demonstrate their new reading ability, and the parents were equally proud to see their children's performance."

The results were extraordinary. By 1998, reading achievement had increased from 49 percent to 69 percent on the CAT/5, a widely used standardized test. Only 5 percent of Hartsfield first graders ranked in the bottom 25 percent for reading, compared with 1995, when 32 percent of them were among the nation's poorest readers!

One impressive comparison can be seen in the graph below, where Hartsfield students are compared with their peers in the rest of the state on the rigorous FCAT state examination.

On the FCAT, the percentage of students scoring Level 3 or above has climbed significantly from 61 percent in 1999 to 73 percent in 2001. These numbers are compared to only 52 percent in 1999 and 61 percent in 2001 for the state of Florida as a whole.

Dr. Joe Torgesen, a distinguished Florida State University education professor and researcher, attributes Hartsfield's achievements to the implementation of *Open Court*. He notes that *Open Court* recognizes phonemic awareness as the "first task that a child faces when they come to school in kindergarten and first grade." Formal studies have shown that programs such as *Open Court* that combine phonemic awareness, explicit phonics instruction, and fluency improve reading ability, especially among children performing below the 20th percentile.



A Bright Future

According to new Hartsfield principal Scotty Crowe, he could see the impressive results the *Open Court* reading program had produced and he continued to support its use school-wide. The school has had a string of successes ever since the *Open Court* reading program was introduced in 1995. In 2000, the school was awarded an "A" grade rating by the Florida Department of Education. "Much of our success," says Crowe, "must be attributed to the *Open Court* series. The faculty and staff at Hartsfield are firm believers in the *Open Court* curriculum and the impact it has on the students' reading achievement. Hartsfield is now a model of effective reading teaching and practice for which local, state, and national attention has been given!"

Thanks to *Open Court*, to principals who embrace their role as instructional leaders, and to a committed teaching staff, Hartsfield Elementary students have been transformed. Children develop a solid reading foundation early on, preparing them for success as they advance in school. This is what keeps *Open Court* driving Hartsfield Elementary's reading program.

To teach a child to read is to affect a life forever.

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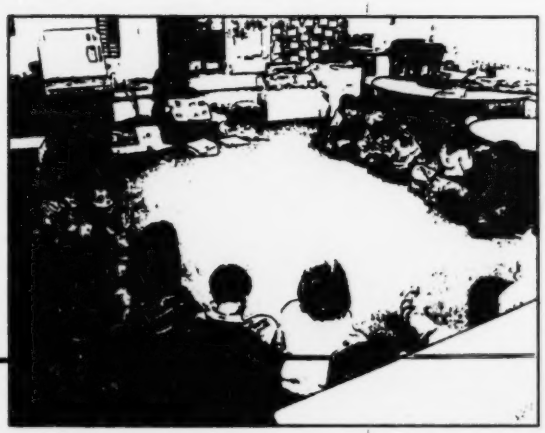
Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, Texas

By the end of the 1996-1997 school year, it was apparent that students in the Fort Worth Independent School District were not learning to read at required levels.

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) reading scores showed minimal gains in third-grade scores from 1994 through 1997. Average scores of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test were falling below the 50th percentile. That same year, the district also failed to meet Imperative I of the District Educational Improvement Plan that stated "all students will be able to read by the end of Grade 2." The district called in a team of reading instruction experts to analyze the problem.



Their solution: The Fort Worth Independent School District must restructure their reading program.

Participating Schools

In the spring of 1998, fourteen high-minority, low-income and low-performing schools were chosen to participate in the implementation of *Open Court* for grades pre-kindergarten through grade two, to begin in the 1998-99 school year. More than 225 teachers were trained in the program.

Open Court consultants were brought into the schools to help with the implementation. They provided teachers and administers with feedback regarding classroom instruction. They also assisted teachers at regular intervals and provided feedback, including classroom coaching and formal observations of classroom instruction.

In the spring of 1999, teachers and administrators were asked to assess the value of the *Open Court* coaching staff. Overall, the staff of the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) expressed an overwhelming satisfaction with the training and the coaching sessions.

Open Court Reading in the Schools

Using the SAT/9 reading test, students in *Open Court* schools were compared to peers in Fort Worth schools taught with traditional reading programs. After two years of *Open Court Reading*, the students in the at-risk schools showed greater gains than students in more affluent schools. All grade levels showed gains that were somewhat higher in *Open Court* schools than in the others.

By the end of the school year, the district saw the reading levels of all grades surpass expectations. Notable improvements also included the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), which identifies students who need help with reading development. Between 1998 and 2000, the percentage of students meeting TPRI criteria jumped nearly 20 points!

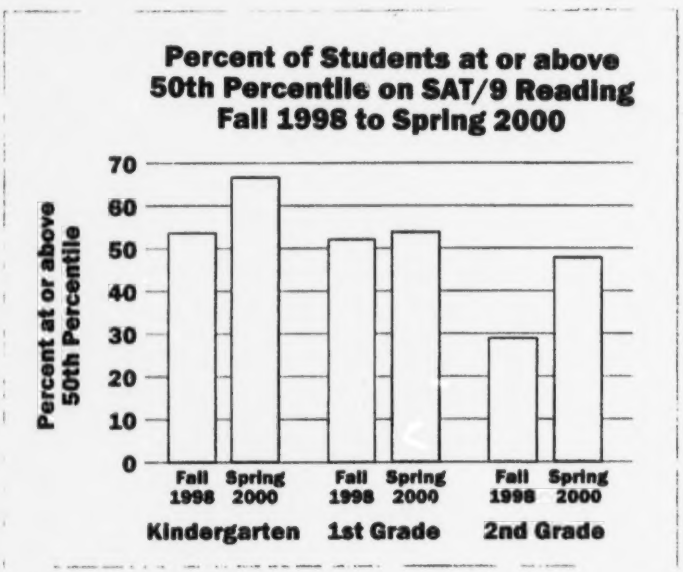
According to Dan O'Brien, a Dallas-based researcher who has been evaluating the Fort Worth reading program for the past three years, first graders taught by *Open Court* showed a far greater increase in reading comprehension than students taught through more traditional methods. "Students in the lower grades are being given an early boost to their school careers," he adds.

A Happy Ending

Recently, 32 Fort Worth Independent District schools received an Exemplary or a Recognized rating from the Texas Education Agency. This rating is based on test scores from the spring 2000 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). To receive a coveted Exemplary rating, 90 percent of the school's students are required to pass the reading, mathematics, and writing portions of the TAAS.

The success of *Open Court* can be felt in ways that go beyond the numbers. According to Fort Worth teachers, students are experiencing growth in their self-esteem, plus the ability to read has opened up new doors to learning and to its rewards. Since *Open Court* was introduced into the Fort Worth Independent School District, administrators have noted fewer disciplinary problems and referrals to special-education programs.

Open Court works. According to Dr. Thomas Tocco, Superintendant of the Fort Worth Independent School District, "The message is clear. Our students are reading. The gap is closing, and not at the expense of any Fort Worth student."



To teach a child to read is to affect a life forever.

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Public School 161, Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York

P.S. 161, located in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, N.Y., has a population of approximately 1,200 students, ninety percent of whom are African-American. Ninety-two percent of all students qualify for a free lunch. Ten years ago, there was a problem at P.S. 161—reading scores needed to be improved. Something had to be done.

To correct the problem, the administration and staff at P.S. 161 committed themselves to making the reading program more structured, more consistent, and most of all, more effective. They chose *Open Court* to help them fulfill this commitment.

Success

The commitment to *Open Court* spelled success for P.S. 161. After only a few years, fully 80 percent of the school's third graders met the state's minimum score for reading.

Of P.S. 161's third graders, 38 percent tested for reading proficiency at the sixth grade level! By 1996, 93 percent of the school's fifth graders were above the state's minimum level in writing tests, slightly above the state average, and 17 points above the average for schools with similar demographics. In 1998, 80.9 percent of students scored at or above grade level on the citywide reading test (CTB). Compare that to the 47 percent performance achieved by schools with similar demographics.

Since 1998, P.S. 161 has scored consistently higher on the NYC Reading Test than the rest of District 17 and the entire city of New York. In 1999, nearly 74 percent of P.S. 161 students scored at Levels 3 and 4 on the NYC Reading Test. That same year, the rest of the district scored a low 33 percent. In 2000 and 2001, the percentage of P.S. 161 students scoring at Levels 3 and 4 continued to almost double the percentage of the rest of the district.

Open Court has allowed P.S. 161 to enjoy success for many years. "While some educators tried to boost their reading curricula with fad reading programs and whole language instruction, we've relied on the basics," says Deborah Barrett, Principal of P.S. 161. "Students enjoy success after success with the basic, solid instruction offered by *Open Court*. By focusing on phonics and authentic literature, teachers help students build a solid foundation for literacy."

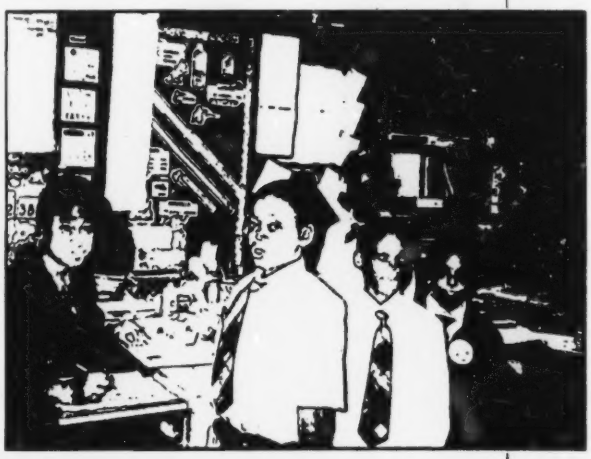
Administrators and reading specialists believe that the program helps students not only develop skills that lead to fluent and automatic reading, but it also helps students learn important comprehension skills. For example, most children who use *Open Court* are able to decode before

they leave kindergarten. Students sound out syllables and words at an early age and build strong learning habits. This enables students to read authentic literature independently by the middle of the first grade.

According to Diane Yules, a reading specialist at P.S. 161, "The best aspects of *Open Court* are that the program builds on skills year after year and complements all the other subject areas, like social studies and science."

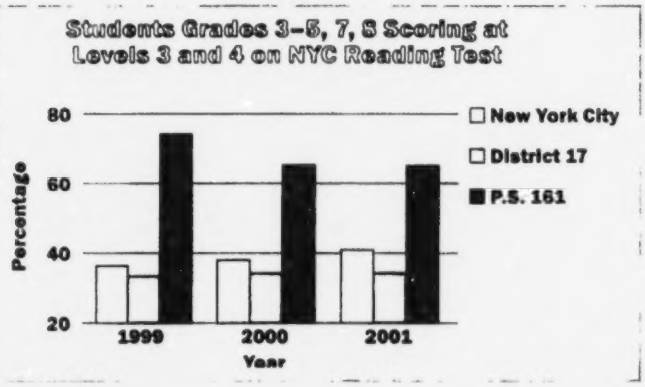
A Bright Future

With 80 percent of the school's third graders meeting the state's minimum for reading, P.S. 161 has enjoyed exceptional success. Test scores are important, but teachers and administrators have seen other rewards as well: children are actively learning and participating in class activities. Attendance is up and discipline problems have declined. "P.S. 161 is a model school not only because of its test scores, but because it demonstrates that good education, and not socioeconomic status, is



responsible for students reaching their potential. And *Open Court* helps students reach that potential," says Principal Barrett.

Principal Barrett speaks highly of her staff. "The *Open Court* program is enhanced by a great team of teachers, which we have here at P.S. 161."



"People are always looking for quick fixes to the education problems in this country, and there aren't any," said Ms. Yules. "*Open Court* requires a lot of work on the part of the teachers and students, but we're happy to work hard if we're going to keep getting such great results."

To teach a child to read is to affect a life forever.

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And the Success Continues . . . . . .

As the previous articles have shown, the *Open Court Reading* program is successful in schools and districts all across the country. Students in low-income or ethnically diverse communities, traditionally considered the most difficult to educate, have shown marked improvement in reading and language arts scores. Year after year, in school after school, students using *Open Court Reading* are learning not only how to read, but to enjoy reading.

And the success continues to grow.

Los Angeles Unified School District

After years of struggling with poor reading scores, the Los Angeles Unified School District gave its elementary schools the freedom to adopt one of two approved research-based reading programs. In 1999, 360 of 450 school in the district chose *Open Court Reading*.

Based on scores released in October 2001, first graders in Los Angeles performed a feat that they had never done before: they outperformed the national average in reading and spelling on the Stanford-9 assessment. The scores were most surprising at Parthenia Street Elementary, where ESL students and students qualifying for a free lunch are almost double the nation's average.

Parthenia Street Elementary saw a 13-point gain on the standard reading exam only one year after implementation.

"We had hardworking teachers but we were going nowhere," said Principal Marcia Jackman. "But with the new program, we're beginning to see results—and it's encouraging."

Oakland Unified School District

The administration at the Oakland Unified School District had a goal: To teach all students to read by the end of the third grade. So in 2000, the district implemented the *Open Court Reading* program into 45 schools with the lowest test scores.

In 2000, 59 percent of first graders scored at or above the benchmark of schools using *Open Court Reading*. In 2001, that score skyrocketed to 72 percent.

"This shows we are getting results from our reading program and that our teachers are doing an excellent job of implementation," said Louise Waters, assistant superintendent of accountability. "Our students who are in *Open Court Reading* for their second year—last year's kindergarteners who are now in first grade—are making excellent progress."

Due to the overwhelming success with *Open Court Reading*, the Oakland Unified School District has since expanded the program to all its 61 elementary schools.

According to Kerry Hamill, Vice President of the School Board, "It is well known that reading is the key to success in all subjects. I believe we are putting in place the foundation of academic success in all subjects."

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Appendix

Research Supporting Instruction in *Open Court Reading*: A Selected Annotated Bibliography

Following is a summary of several of the most significant studies in reading instruction from the past thirty years. Each study has reported results providing insights into at least one element critical to a successful reading program. These studies and many others serve as the cornerstone of the instruction found in *Open Court Reading*. The authors of *Open Court Reading* continue their efforts to update the program as new studies are published and new research on instructional methods becomes available. Several of the studies listed below actually used and/or cited portions of *Open Court Reading* in their investigations for successful practices. Others used instructional methods incorporated in *Open Court Reading*. The sum of the knowledge revealed by these studies continues to support and enhance the philosophy of this program.

Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read. Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Draws from decades of research on the nature and development of reading proficiency to show the role that phonics should play in a complete program of beginning reading instruction. Offers research support for the use of systematic, explicit phonics instruction.

American Federation of Teachers. (1998). *Building on the best, learning from what works: Seven promising reading and language arts programs*. Washington, DC.

Part of a series about research-based programs that show promise for raising student achievement (especially in low-performing schools), this report describes seven promising reading and language arts programs that show evidence of high standards, effectiveness, replicability, and support structures. The seven programs are: (1) Cooperative Integrated Reading and Comprehension, (2) Direct Instruction, (3) Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, (4) Junior Great Books, (5) Multicultural Reading and Thinking, (6) *Open Court Collections for Young Scholars*, and (7) Success for All.

Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers. The report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Education.

A landmark report that contains a synthesis of extensive research findings on the nature of reading and reading instruction. Proposes that (1) the knowledge is now available to make worthwhile improvements in reading throughout the United States, and (2) if the practices seen in the classrooms of the best teachers in the best schools could be introduced everywhere, improvement in reading would be dramatic.

Anderson, R. C., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 255–292). New York: Longman.

Argues (1) that one of the most basic insights about learning is that it depends to a large degree on prior knowledge, and (2) that the *system* of understandings, or knowledge structures, about a concept that students bring to learning is more important than facts they may know or not know. Labels this view of learning *schema theory*. Explains that in schema theory, knowledge, or *schema*, is a large network of abstract mental structures

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that represent individual, personal understandings of the world. Relationships among schemata are like webs, with each schema interconnected to many others. Schemata grow and change as we acquire new information through experience and reading.

Ball, E. W., & Blachman, B. A. (1991). Does phoneme awareness training in kindergarten make a difference in early word recognition and developmental spelling? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 26, 49–66.

Finds that seven weeks of explicit instruction in phonemic awareness combined with explicit instruction in sound-spelling correspondences for kindergarten children was more powerful than instruction in sound-spelling correspondences alone and more powerful than language activities in improving reading skills.

Bereiter, C. & Scardamalia, M. (1993). *Surpassing ourselves: An inquiry into the nature and implications of expertise*. Chicago: Open Court.

Examines the nature of expertise and discusses expert-novice comparisons, which look at what experts in a particular field *know* and at what they *do* that novices in the field do not know or do, or do differently or less often than experts. Concludes that these findings are valuable in education because they show what the results of successful learning look like.

Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (1999). Comprehension: The sine qua non of reading. *Teaching and Change*, 6, 197–211.

Discusses the relevance to classroom instruction of reading-comprehension research. Notes how knowledge of the world and active engagement with ideas in a text influence comprehension. Examines the power of background knowledge, reading aloud and discussing literature with students, active engagement in independent reading, and questioning the author.

Brown, A., & Campione, J. (1990). Communities of learning and thinking, or a context by any other name. *Human Development*, 21, 109–125.

Discusses the distinction between "experts" and "novices," noting that students are "universal novices," faced constantly with new learning tasks. Argues that the aim of instruction should be to help students to be *intelligent* novices who, although they do not possess knowledge of a particular subject, know how to get that knowledge and how to learn from texts rather than to memorize facts.

Bruer, J. T. (1993). The mind's journey from novice to expert. *American Educator*, 17, 6–15, 38–46.

Examines the field of cognitive science research—the study of thinking and learning. Argues for the use of teaching methods based on cognitive science and calls these methods "the educational equivalents of polio vaccine and penicillin." Notes, in particular, that such methods have been shown to produce increases in reading comprehension.

Chall, J. S. (1967). *Learning to read: The great debate*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

A landmark examination of a large body of reading- and learning-related research. Concludes that, as a complement to connected and meaningful reading, systematic phonics instruction is a valuable component of beginning reading instruction.

Cunningham, A. E. (1990). Explicit versus implicit instruction in phonological awareness. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 50, 429–444.

Finds that explicit instruction in how segmentation and blending are involved in the reading process is superior to instruction that does not explicitly teach kindergarten children to apply phonemic awareness to reading. Notes that the children who received explicit instruction in phonemic awareness did better than did a group of first-grade children who had no such instruction.

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Ehri, L. C. (2000). Learning to read and learning to spell: Two sides of a coin. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 20, 19–36.

Draws from research findings to discuss similarities and differences between learning to read and learning to spell words.

Felton, R. H. (1993). Effects of instruction on the decoding skills of children with phonological-processing problems. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 26, 583–89.

Describes a longitudinal study of kindergarten through second-grade children that compared the efficacy of reading interventions defined as *code-based*, which emphasized identification of words based on letter-sound relationships and patterns, and *meaning-based*, which emphasized the identification of words based on context and supplemented by partial letter-sound cues (i.e., beginning and ending sounds). Reports that at the end of second grade, children who had received the code-based instruction earned significantly higher mean scores than did children who had received the meaning-based approach on measures of word recognition and spelling. Concludes that five elements are critical to a beginning program for children at risk of reading failure: (1) direct instruction in language analysis; (2) explicit teaching of the alphabetic code; (3) simultaneous teaching of reading and spelling; (4) explicit, systematic reading instruction; and (5) using decodable words and texts to enhance automaticity.

Foorman, B., Francis, D., Beeler, T., Winikates, D., & Fletcher, J. M. (1997). Early interventions for children with reading problems: Study designs and preliminary findings. *Learning Disabilities: A Multi-disciplinary Journal*, 8, 63–71.

Describes a study in which 260 children were randomly assigned to a kindergarten curriculum that focused on the explicit, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness and sound-spelling correspondences (n=80) and a standard curriculum (n=160) that consisted of developmentally appropriate practices described by the state of Texas's essential elements for kindergarten. Reports that (1) the explicit, systematic instruction in sound-spelling correspondences was more effective in reducing reading disabilities than was instruction in a print-rich environment characterized by reading interesting stories; (2) the children in the explicit-instruction curriculum made significant gains in phonemic awareness over the year; and (3) the greatest gains occurred when explicit instruction involved teaching sound-spelling correspondences along with phonemic awareness. Concludes that explicit, systematic instruction in sound-spelling patterns in first- and second-grade classrooms can prevent reading difficulties in children at risk of reading failure.

Foorman, B., Francis, D., Novy, D., & Liberman, D. (1991). How letter-sound instruction mediates progress in first-grade reading and spelling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 456–469.

Describes a study in which 80 first-grade children in classrooms that differed in the amount of sound-letter instruction offered daily were administered tests of phonemic segmentation, reading, and spelling. Reports that although no differences were found on phonemic segmentation tasks in the various classrooms, children in classrooms that provided more letter-sound instruction showed more spelling and reading improvement.

Foorman, B., Francis, D., Fletcher, J., Schatschneider, C., & Mehta, P. (1998). The role of instruction in learning to read: Preventing reading failure in at-risk children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 37–55.

Reports on a study in which first- and second-grade students (n=285) received instruction in one of three types of classroom reading programs: (1) direct instruction in sound-spelling correspondences; (2) less direct instruction in sound-spelling correspondences; and (3) implicit instruction in the alphabetic code as part of reading connected text. Results show advantages for reading programs that emphasize explicit instruction in sound-spelling correspondences.

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Graves, M. F., Juel, C., & Graves, B. B. (2000). *Teaching reading in the 21st century*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Drawing from what is known from research, theory, and classroom experiences, this book presents a comprehensive plan to increase literacy levels and to assist students in becoming lifelong readers. Chapters titles are (1) Reading and Learning to Read, (2) Reading Instruction, (3) Emergent Literacy, (4) Word Recognition, (5) Vocabulary Development, (6) Scaffolding Students' Comprehension of Text: Teacher-Directed Approaches, (7) Guiding Students toward Independence in Reading, (8) Teaching for Understanding in Content Areas, (9) Writing and Reading, (10) Literacy Instruction for Non-Native Speakers of English, (11) Classroom Assessment, and (12) Classroom Portraits.

Grossen, B. (1997). *A synthesis of research on reading from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

Examines and synthesizes 30 years of reading research carried out by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Presents seven key research-based principles of effective reading instruction: (1) begin teaching phonemic awareness directly at an early age; (2) teach each sound-spelling correspondence explicitly; (3) teach frequent, highly regular sound-spelling relationships systematically; (4) show children exactly how to sound out words; (5) use connected, decodable text for children to practice the sound-spelling relationships they learn; (6) use interesting stories to develop language comprehension; and (7) balance the use of interesting stories with decoding instruction.

Juel, C., & Minden-Cupp, C. (2000). Learning to read words: Linguistic units and strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35, 458–492.

Analyzes word recognition instruction in four first-grade classrooms. Concludes that (1) differential instruction may be helpful in first grade; (2) children who enter first grade with low literacy levels benefit from early and intense exposure to phonics; and (3) a structured phonics curriculum that includes a focus on onsets and rimes and sounding and blending phonemes within rimes is effective.

Kuhn, M. R., & Stahl, S. A. (2000). *Fluency: A review of developmental and remedial practices*. CIERA-R-2-008. Ann Arbor: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, University of Michigan.

Provides findings of a survey that examined theoretical papers and practical studies that related to fluency instruction and reading development. Among the findings reported are (1) teacher-assisted approaches to fluency instruction, such as reading–while–listening, seem to be more effective than non-assisted approaches, such as repeated reading; and (2) effective fluency instruction moves beyond automatic word recognition to include rhythm and expression, or the prosodic features of language.

Lyon, G. R. (1997). *Report on learning disabilities research*. Testimony given before the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Argues that the development of phonemic awareness, the development of an understanding of the alphabetic principle, and the translation of these skills to the application of phonics in reading and spelling words are nonnegotiable beginning reading skills that all children must master in order to understand what they read and to learn from their reading sessions.

Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do*. Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.

Argues that well-designed, controlled comparisons of instructional approaches have consistently supported the following components and practices in effective reading instruction: (1) direct teaching of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation; (2) phoneme awareness; (3) systematic, explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle; (4) daily exposure to a variety of reading materials, as well as incentives for children to read

independently; (5) vocabulary instruction that includes a variety of complementary methods designed to explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning; (6) comprehension strategies that include predicting, summarizing, clarifying, questioning, and visualizing; and (7) frequent student writing to enable deeper understanding of what is read.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read. An evidence-based assessment of scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Presents the findings of the National Reading Panel, a group of reading educators and researchers, who were charged by the United States Congress to assess the status of research-based knowledge about reading, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The panel's conclusions include the following: (1) systematic phonological and phonemic awareness instruction contributes strongly to reading success; (2) systematic instruction in phonics, stressing letter-sound correspondences and their use in spelling and reading, produces significant benefits for students in grades K–6 and for students having difficulty learning to read; (3) teaching students to use a range of reading comprehension techniques is the most effective way to improve comprehension.

Pressley, M., & Symons, S. (1995). Reading comprehension strategies. In M. Pressley & V. Woloshyn (Eds.), *Cognitive strategy instruction that really improves children's academic performance* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Reviews research indicating that specific instruction in reading comprehension strategies is effective in improving comprehension for students at various grade levels, including those with learning disabilities. Identifies the reading strategies used by highly competent readers, including summarization, mental imagery, question asking and answering, and activating prior knowledge.

Stahl, S. A., Duffy-Hester, A. M., & Stahl, K. A. D. (1998). Everything you wanted to know about phonics (but were afraid to ask). *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33, 338–355.

Reviews what research has revealed to be the basic principles underlying word learning and phonics instruction. Concludes that effective phonics instruction (1) develops an understanding of the alphabetic principle, (2) develops phonological/phonemic awareness, (3) provides a grounding in alphabetic knowledge (the names and shapes of letters), (4) does not teach rules, does not dominate instruction, limits the use of worksheets, (5) provides sufficient practice in reading words in isolation and in stories and in writing words, (6) leads to automatic word recognition, and (7) is only one part of reading instruction.

Stanovich, K. E. (1994). Romance and reality. *The Reading Teacher*, 47, 280–291.

Concludes that the role played by direct instruction in the alphabetic principle in facilitating early reading instruction is one of the most well-established conclusions in all of reading-related science, and that, conversely, the idea that learning to read is just like learning to speak is accepted by no responsible linguist, psychologist, or cognitive scientist in the research community.

Tan, A., & Nicholson, T. (1997). Flashcards revisited: Training poor readers to read words faster improves their comprehension of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89, 276–288.

Describes a study in which second- through third-grade students were placed in two instructional groups. Students in one group received instruction that emphasized word recognition and fluency, with only brief attention given to the meanings of the words. Students in this group practiced recognizing target words until they could read each word without hesitation. Students in a second group received instruction that was heavily oriented toward developing their understanding of the meanings of the target words, with

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no attention given to the development of word recognition. Reports that the students in the group that received word recognition and fluency instruction answered correctly more comprehension questions than did students in the group that did not receive such instruction.

Torgesen, J. K., & Mathes, P. (1999). What every teacher should know about phonological awareness. In Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE), *Reading research anthology: The why? of reading instruction*. Novato, CA: Arena Press.

Based on extensive research findings, concludes that phonological awareness should be a part of reading instruction for every child, and that this instruction should be combined with systematic, explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle and with frequent opportunities to use both oral and written language and to read good literature.

Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R., Rashotte, C. A., Alexander, A. W., & Conway, T. (1997). Preventive and remedial interventions for children with severe reading disabilities. *Learning Disabilities: A Multi-disciplinary Journal*, 8, 51–61.

Summarizes ongoing research that is designed to generate new knowledge about the relative effectiveness of different approaches to the prevention and remediation of reading disabilities in children, particularly difficulties in acquiring accurate and fluent word reading skills. Subjects, 180 kindergarten children who varied widely in their general verbal ability and home literacy environments, were in one of four instructional conditions, varying in content and level of explicit instruction in phonological/phonemic awareness and sound-spelling correspondences. Results indicate that, at the end of the second grade, children who received the most explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle had much stronger reading skills than did children in all the other instructional groups. In addition, children who received the most explicit instruction showed the lowest need to be held back a grade. Other analyses show that growth in reading skills was mediated by improvements in phonological processing skills.

Tunmer, W. E., Herriman, M. L., & Nesdale, A. R. (1988). Metalinguistic abilities and beginning reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 23, 134–158.

Concludes that the performance of children on tests designed to measure their concepts about print predicts their future reading achievement and is related strongly to other, more traditional measures of reading readiness and achievement.

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